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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/8/07

SPONSOR Martinez, R. LAST UPDATED HB

SHORT TITLE UNM Esther Martinez Scholarship Program SB 719

ANALYST Leger

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08		
	\$1,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

New Mexico Higher Education Department (HED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 719 appropriates \$1 million from the general fund to the Board of Regents of the University of New Mexico (UNM) for the purpose of a Native American language scholarship program in honor of Esther Martinez of Ohkay Owingeh and her dedication to the preservation of Native American languages.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$1 million contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

SB 719 would honor the late Esther Martinez of Ohkay Owingeh by establishing a \$1 million scholarship fund in her honor at UNM. According to HED, the Native American Language

Scholarship Program (NALSP) at UNM would need to be established. The funds will pay for the development of a curriculum designed for teachers to teach native languages and the technology to facilitate it. The funds will be used to train elementary and secondary educators teaching Native American communities. The NALSP will be open to UNM students majoring in education; Native community educators; and professionals that deal one on one with Native speakers in the native communities such as nurses in a reservation clinic. The curriculum will address the need of elementary and secondary teachers needing certification to teach Native languages in a classroom setting.

In 2002, the New Mexico legislature passed a bill requiring teachers of native languages who teach in public school to have certification, but there is no money to support the initiative and provide training support. NALSP would provide the curriculum for certification.

The following New Mexico tribes and pueblos are teaching native languages in their elementary schools: Navajo; Zuni, Acoma, Laguna, Santa Ana, Cochiti, Zia, Tesuque, Santa Clara, Pojoaque, Picuris, Ohkay Owingeh, Mescalero, and Jicarilla. The following secondary schools are teaching the Keres language: Laguna/Acoma High School and Bernalillo High School.

IAD reports that before her death in a September 2006 car accident, Martinez was widely recognized for her efforts to preserve and promote Native languages in New Mexico and beyond. In 1997, she received the Teacher of the Year Award from the National Council of American Indians and in 1998, the NM Arts Commission gave her the Governor's Award for Excellence. In 2006, she was named a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts ("NEA"). The award is considered the nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. At the Washington NEA ceremony in her honor, Esther was praised for creating cultural bridges through the Tewa language and traditions.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

According to IAD, Native American language penetration is on the decline among New Mexico's Indians, especially among the younger generations. This trend is dramatically reflected in such statistics regarding New Mexico's most populous tribe, the Navajo Nation. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the percentage of English-speaking only Navajos between the ages of 5 and 17 has increased from 11.8% in 1980 to 48.7% in 2000. The preservation of Native culture and traditions is inextricably linked to language preservation. HED sites that according to the Indigenous Language Institute, unless children are using the language in everyday life, they are one generation away from losing it. Educating people to do this work will strengthen the possibility of the survival of the language.

For Native American people, most languages were oral, without written forms. So loss of the language means loss of all the accumulated knowledge of culture, spiritual practice, medicinal knowledge, custom, and history, a unique world view, and expression of a whole people. Such loss means loss of diversity and that is an irreplaceable loss. Complexity of cultural practice, tribal and familial relations, unique and intangible human resources and expressions are all contained within the spoken languages, songs, stories, and traditions.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL?

According to HED, New Mexico's shortage of teachers who are qualified to teach Native languages would not be addressed by state policy. Schools that have not met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind Act would continue to be at a disadvantage because educators teaching Native languages would not be certified to teach the languages.

JL/nt